EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

32

POL 14 VIET S

1503

Department of State

TELEGRAM

SECRET 054

PAGE 01 SAIGON 14095 01 OF 02 011307Z

51
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 /026 W

P 011056Z AUG 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9458

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 14095

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/GDC, NR
REVIEWED BY Ivan Izaly DATE 1/26/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS-AUTH. [illegible] (S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Saigon 14095 S

EXDIS

SUBJ: PHAN QUANG DAN'S EFFORTS TO INSURE A CONTESTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

1. SUMMARY: MINISTER OF STATE PHAN QUANG DAN HAS PLAYED AN ACTIVE, IF AS YET UNSUCCESSFUL, ROLE WITHIN THE CABINET IN FAVOR OF POSTPONING THE OCT 3 ELECTION AND AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CURRENT ELECTION LAW TO ESTABLISH THE BASIS FOR A CONTESTED POLL SOMETIME IN DECEMBER. HIS PROPOSAL, ALONG WITH OTHER POSSIBILITIES, WAS DISCUSSED WITH PRESIDENT THIEU, THE PRIME MINISTER AND SEVERAL OTHER MINISTERIAL-LEVEL OFFICIALS ON AUG 30. DESPITE THE CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO THESE ALTERNATIVES, IT STILL SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL PROCEED WITH THE ELECTION ON OCT 3 AND TREAT IT AS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE NON-PARTICIPATION OF GENERAL MINH AND VICE PRESIDENT KY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RACE HAS POSED QUESTIONS ON WHICH OPINIONS, EVEN WITHIN PRESIDENT THIEU'S CABINET, HAVE VARIED. MOST DISTURBED IN THIS LATTER GROUP OVER THE PROSPECT OF AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION WAS DR. PHAN QUANG DAN, GVN MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAND CLEARANCE AND HAMLET ESTABLISHMENT. IN EARLY AUGUST DAN WAS QUICK TO SEE THE POSSIBILITY THAT KY OR MINH OR BOTH MIGHT NOT RUN, AND HE EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT. THEN, AFTER THE MINH AND KY DECISIONS TO STEP DOWN ON AUG 20 AND 23, RESPECTIVELY, DAN WENT INTO HIGH GEAR IN HIS SEARCH FOR A MORE SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS HE SAW BREWING. FOLLOWING NUMEROUS PRELIMINARY CONTACTS, HE CALLED MEETINGS AT HIS HOME ON AUG 28 AND 29 DURING WHICH HE

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

(1)

DECLASSIFIED

EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

WORKED OUT A PLAN IN COLLABORATION WITH SEVERAL SENIOR GVN CABINET MEMBERS INCLUDING FOREIGN MINIST[illegible] LAM, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PHUONG, JUSTICE MINIST[illegible]HU, EDUCATION MINISTER TINH AND INSPECTORATE CHAIRMAN [illegible]O XUAN TICH (TICH AND TINH ARE RELATIVES OF THIEU). PRIME MINISTER KHIEM WAS INFORMED LATER, ACCORDING TO DR. DAN, AND GAVE HIS APPROVAL TO THEIR EFFORTS.

3. THE PLAN WORKED OUT BY DAN AND HIS COLLEAGUES VIEWED THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN UNCONTESTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OCT 3 AS HIGHLY UNDESIRABLE FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL REASONS (INCLUDING POSSIBLE LOSS OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE). A PRESIDENTIAL RESIGNATION (KY'S SUGGESTION) WAS RULED OUT ON THE GROUNDS IT WOULD "GIVE RISE TO MUCH CONFUSION AND DANGER AND IT WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO ALMOST ANYTHING." THE PLAN PROPOSED A STRATEGY WHEREBY THE PRESENT PRESIDENTIAL TERM WOULD BE EXTENDED AND THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE POSTPONED AND REORGANIZED TO PERMIT OTHER CANDIDATES TO ENTER. (UNDERLYING THE PLAN WAS THE ARGUABLE, IF NOT DOUBTFUL, ASSUMPTION THAT MINH AND KY WOULD DO SO.) DEC 12, 1971 WAS SUGGESTED AS THE TARGET DATE FOR A NEW ELECTION.

4. GREAT EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON THE NEED TO ADHERE TO A FULLY LEGAL PROCESS. THE KEY PROPOSAL PROVIDED FOR THE CALLING OF A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER A THREE-POINT AGENDA: (A) ADDING A NEW PARAGRAPH TO ARTICLE 52 OF THE CONSTITUTION (WHICH FIXES THE PRESIDENTIAL TERM) TO ALLOW THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE "IF FOR SOME REASON THE ELECTION CANNOT BE ORGANIZED IN TIME ...HOWEVER THIS PERIOD MUST BE KEPT AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE AND WILL BE FIXED BY THE ELECTION LAW"; (B) AMENDING ARTICLE 2 OF THE 1971 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LAW TO PROVIDE FOR A NEW ELECTION DATE; (C) AMENDING ARTICLE 10, PARAGRAPH 7 OF THE ELECTION LAW TO PREVENT ONE CANDIDATE FROM MONOPOLIZING THE SIGNATURES OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILMEN.

5. THE ASSEMBLY TO BE CALLED INTO SESSION WOULD BE THE INCUMBENT, LAME DUCK BODY, RATHER THAN THE ONE ELECTED AUG 29 WHICH WILL NOT TAKE OFFICE UNTIL AS AS YET TO BE DETERMINED DATE IN OCTOBER.

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

DECLASSIFIED

EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 14095, 01 OF 02 011307Z

6. ON AUG 30 DR. DAN MET WITH PRESIDENT THIEU, PRIME MINISTER KHIEM AND 6 OR 7 MINISTER, PLUS A COUPLE OF OTHER CLOSE GOVERNMENTAL ASSOCIATES OF THIEU. THE DAN PLAN AND OTHERS THAT EVOLVED DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION WERE EXAMINED AT LENGTH. THE MEETING LASTED FOUR TO FIVE HOURS. FOLLOWING THIS CONFERENCE, WE WERE INFORMED BY A DISAPPOINTED DAN THAT THE RESULTS HAD BEEN ALMOST THE REVERSE OF WHAT HE HAD HOPED FOR. NEITHER PRIME MINISTER KHIEM NOR THE MINISTER ATTENDING THE MEETING WHO HAD WORKED WITH DAN ON THE PLAN HAD PERSISTED IN THEIR SUPPORT, THE CONSEQUENCES BEING WHAT DAN SAW AS A DECISION BY THIEU TO GO AHEAD AND HOLD THE OCT 3 ELECTION ON SCHEDULE.

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

DECLASSIFIED

POL 14 VIETS

Department of State TELEGRAM

EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

SECRET 289

PAGE 01 SAIGON 14095 02 OF 02 011527Z

42
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 /026 W

064500

P 011056Z AUG 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9461

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 14095

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT

7. OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE HAD ON THIS MEETING REVEALED THAT DAN'S PLAN, AFTER THOROUGH CONSIDERATION, WAS REJECTED AS NOT PROVIDING AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH, WITH WHICH THIEU ASSOCIATED HIMSELF, WAS TO CONSIDER THE ELECTION AS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. THIEU SAID THAT IF HE RECEIVED LESS THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE HE WOULD RESIGN. HE ALSO ADDED THAT HE WOULD RESIGN LATER IF THIS APPROACH RESULTED IN THE TERMINATION OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE.

8. PRESIDENT THIEU IS EXPECTED TO INFORM THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE OF HIS DECISION IN A TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCAST WITHIN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO. THE ODDS ARE THAT HE WILL HOLD THE ELECTION ON OCT 3 AS SCHEDULED AND TREAT THE OUTCOME AS A REFERENDUM.
BUNKER

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

SECRET
DECLASSIFIED